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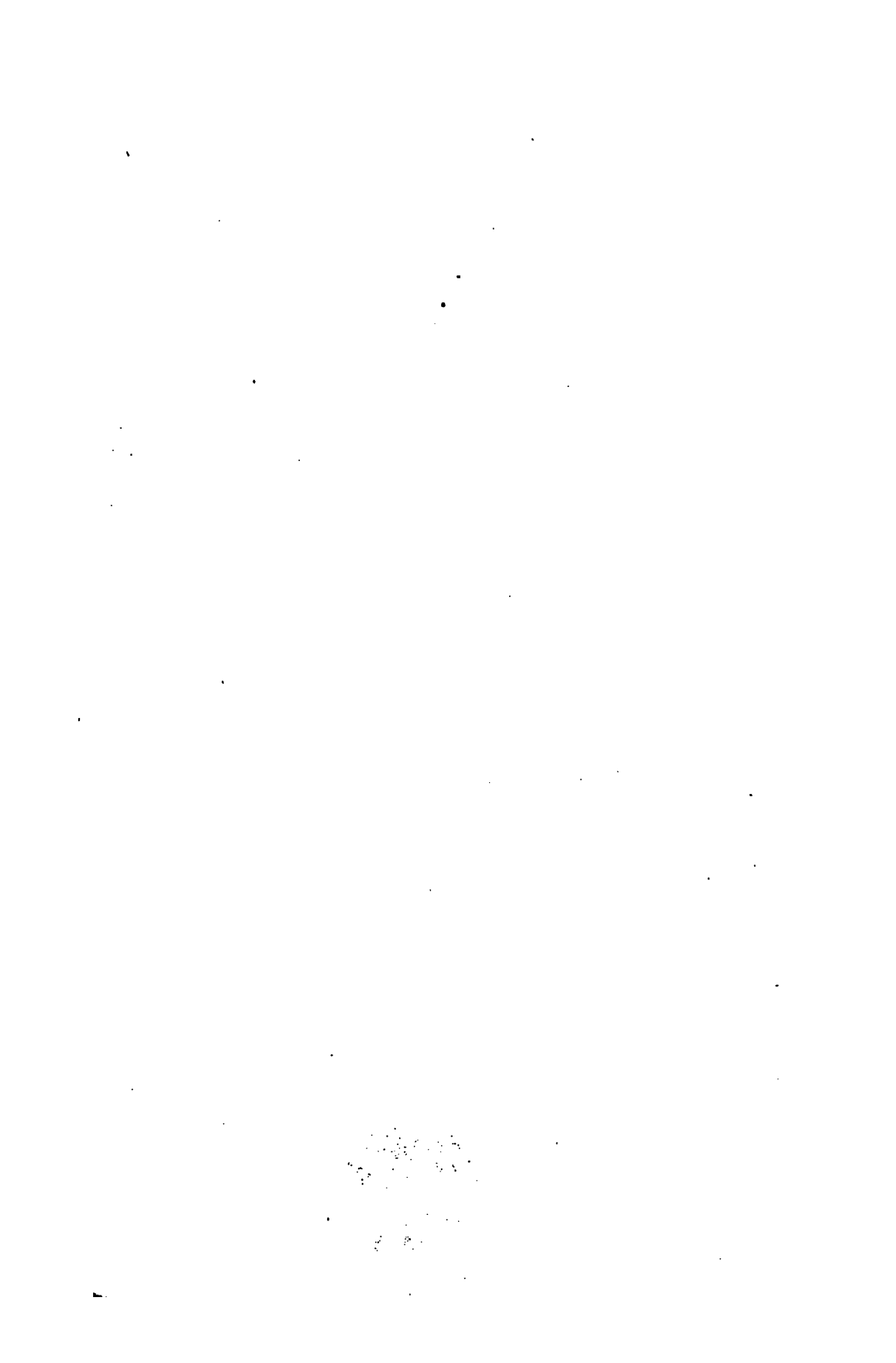


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AN EXCURSION
FROM
JERICHO
—
TO THE
RUINS OF THE ANCIENT CITIES
OF
GERAZA AND AMMAN,
IN THE
COUNTRY EAST OF THE RIVER JORDAN.

J. H.

LONDON:
T. HATCHARD, 187, PICCADILLY.
1852.



203. 2. 25^M.

LONDON :
G. J. PALMER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

P R E F A C E.

THE following extract from the journal of a Radcliffe Travelling Fellow of Oxford, is intended to call the attention of travellers to the interesting country to which the Author's journey relates. A country tending to awaken associations in the minds of educated and of Christian men more than any other portion of the globe : inasmuch as it is intimately connected with every period and with every narrative of sacred and profane history.

Whilst the fabulous plains of Troy, and of the kingdom of Lavinia—the battle grounds of Hector and Achilles—of Turnus and

Æneas — whilst the wonderous remains of Thebes and Persepolis, of Egypt and Assyria—whilst the storied fields of classic Greece and every site of Roman glory — whilst every incident and every trace of the might and magnificence of the heathen world, have been, and continue to be the subjects of intense interest and minute research,—the country of the Bible history—the sure and certain lands where history itself begins—where the Deity deigned to make known his laws and his commands—where Abraham and Moses, Joshua and Saul, under the inspiration of God's will, reigned and conquered and built great cities,—that country excites no interest, and invites no enterprising travellers. This inquiring age is absorbed in the elucidation of profane, not of religious history ; of heathen, not of Biblical geography.

These observations do not apply to the Holy Land, commonly so called. That li-

mitted portion of Syria, the scene of the labours and the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour, has obtained all the honour, the interest, and the investigation which it demands ; but why is the Jordan to remain the Rubicon of man's research in Scriptural geography ?

The author has wandered over the length and breadth of the country of the Ten Tribes—from the Orontes (“the entering into Hamath”) to the “River of Egypt,” and from the Euphrates to the “Great Sea,” and he can assure the traveller that he will find in those deeply interesting, but neglected regions, all that can gratify his most ardent expectations, and recompense him for the severest toils.

The climate is pure and healthy, and portions of the country are in the highest degree picturesque and beautiful. In the Houran especially, his path will be encumbered with the ruins of ancient cities, the

sites and former names of which require elucidation.

The inhabitants, although under little authority, are nevertheless easily managed by courteous treatment and pecuniary recompense ; and their laws and their habits of life illustrate, in a remarkable manner, the records of the sacred historians.

What a fresh and fertile field is here presented for the operations of our Christian missionaries, as well as for the investigations of erudite travellers ! How often has the author observed and lamented the ardent aspirations, and the feeble performances of the former, lingering on "this side Jordan !"

The Holy Land is, indeed, a most attractive vineyard for the labours of the Christian husbandman. The soil of that degenerate country is yet a stony waste, or rank with Roman weeds ; but in vain do the indefatigable members of the Bible Society spread

the sacred volume on the surface of that holy ground. They sow plenteously, but reap sparingly. They little know by what subtle means the enemy, the Roman Catholics, defeat their endeavours. How stealthily they follow in their track, sowing "tares," and devouring the "good seed" almost before it has reached the earth.

The emissaries of the Papal Power in Syria are ever on the watch to purchase the Bibles which the missionaries distribute, or to beg them as a boon from their unsuspecting hands, for the purpose of consigning them to the flames.

Orthodox Christianity can never be established in the Holy Land by the efforts of wandering agents of any Missionary Society. The Roman Catholics, by the radiating influence of their fixed stations, and their resident propagandists, effectually circumvent the locomotive missionary, rendering his labours abortive and his path trackless.

A different and more comprehensive system must be adopted to regenerate *apostolical* Christianity in the land of its birth.

In the meanwhile, the author would earnestly entreat the ardent pioneers of Christian truth not to pause on the banks of the Jordan, but boldly to cross that consecrated stream, and plunge into the wilderness beyond. And, amongst the mountains of Gilead, and the ruins of Geraza and of Amman, he will find a country morally, as it is physically, untrodden and uncultivated by the sowers of God's holy Word, and almost a blank in the map of modern geography.

AN EXCURSION,

&c.

At the distance of forty miles, to the east of Jerusalem, is a vast plain, scathed and blighted by a burning sun and subterraneous fires ; a rapid river flows through the centre, and barren mountains encompass it on every side but one, where a lake, into which the river discharges itself, expands into a waste of salt and bitter waters, its desolate shores shrouded by frowning precipices, and its sullen surface reposing in the stillness of death.

In the midst of this dreary region, a few wretched habitations surround a ruined tower, and this is all that now remains of the ancient city of Jericho. I had lingered

three days with my companions* in this memorable spot, waiting the arrival of some Arabs, who had been summoned from their mountains to escort us to Djeerash.† Towards the evening of the third day they appeared to our anxious view, first, as a dark spot in the horizon across the plain eastward, and, growing every moment more and more apparent, until, ere long, five horsemen, with their lances dancing in the air, were distinguished advancing rapidly towards us ; some soldiers of the Aga of Jericho rode out to meet them, and, after a short parley, conducted them into the village. Having dismounted and fettered their panting horses to the ground, they approached our party,

* M. Alexandre de Laborde, a name well known in French literature ; M. Léon de Laborde, his son, a distinguished traveller and author ; and M. Becker, the son of a general of the French army.

† Geraza.

which was formed to receive them, consisting of the Aga and his guards, three or four soldiers of Jerusalem, who had accompanied us from thence, ourselves, and attendants.

The Arab strangers proved, as we had anticipated, to be our promised escort; they were invited by the Aga, with much courtesy, to seat themselves; and, coffee having been offered to each, an arrangement for our safe conduct to Djeerash and our return to Jericho was soon agreed upon, and we prepared to depart before the dawn of the following day.

The Arabs were five in number, two of them were brothers, the elder, whose name was Fáhdel, was chief of a tribe, which, in league with two others, commanded the country through which our intended journey lay. Sheik Fáhdel was not less distinguished from his companions by his rank, than by the superiority of his personal appearance;

he was above six feet in height, thin, but well-proportioned ; his walk was particularly upright and graceful ; and his manners were dignified, because they were perfectly natural.

His brother was a fine youth, about twenty years of age. There was a strong resemblance between them ; in stature he was less than his brother, and his features were not quite so regular, but his expression was more pleasing and animated ; he seemed to feel embarrassed by the formality of the party which surrounded him, and he told us afterwards that he had never before been in the presence of strangers.

Two of the Arabs were nearly related to the Sheik, and the fifth was an attendant. Their dress consisted of a double shirt, which reached below the knee, sinking a little over the bosom ; a girdle of leather was bound round their loins ; the chief and his brother wore a pair of cotton drawers,

and a tattered robe of silk over their shirt ; two of them had nothing on their head, and their feet were bare. The Sheik wore a small turban which had once been white, but was now the colour of his own tawny complexion ; the two others wore the usual Arab head-dress, consisting of a coarse party-coloured handkerchief, in which the yellow prevails, placed on the crown of the head, and bound round the forehead with a cord (or skein) of raw worsted, the ends of the handkerchief hanging down on the shoulders and neck, and the forehead almost concealed by a deep fold of the handkerchief, falling in front under the bandage.

Their only weapon was a lance of eight or nine feet in length, except the chief, who had a sabre loosely swung over his shoulders by a long loop of cord, reaching to the middle of the thigh.

Our party started, as had been agreed

upon, at three o'clock, A.M., well armed and well mounted. Our own dress was similar to that worn by the Turks of Palestine, which differs little from the common Oriental costume, except that a handkerchief, after the Arab fashion, as a protection to the eyes from the scorching heat of the desert, is sometimes substituted for the small red cap or turboosh, upon which the folds of the turban are piled.

The plain was cold even to chilliness, and we were therefore well disposed to make up for the time we had loitered at Jericho, by pushing on at a rapid pace for the banks and fords of the Jordan. Several horsemen belonging to the Aga accompanied us as far as the river, which we reached after a journey of two hours and a half, having traversed a desolate plain, partially covered with scanty shrubs. The Jordan, at the spot where we arrived, was divided into two branches,

forming an islet, clad with the same rough bushes, and bordered, like the banks of the river, with weeping-willows, whose pendent boughs swept the surface of the stream. And this is the spot resorted to by Christian pilgrims for the performance of their ablutions, as the same where our Saviour was baptized by John. Not a modern building, nor the ruins of any of a former period, were to be seen in the neighbourhood. The western branch of the river, which is the most considerable, is about eighty feet in breadth, and five or six in depth, and the current is extremely rapid.

The melting snows of Lebanon had increased the abundance of its waters, so that we were obliged to remove our baggage, and to place it in such a manner on the tallest horse of the party as to secure its safety and keep it dry whilst passing the river. Some of our party took off their clothes, and,

plunging into the stream, gained the opposite bank by swimming. For my own part, having entered the river below my companions, I was forced, by the strength of the current, much beyond the point where, from the nature of the opposite bank, an easy landing was to be obtained. I was thus hurried amongst the willows and other bushes on the borders, and had not one of the Arabs, who had already arrived at the opposite side, hastened to my assistance, I should most probably have been drowned.

We were cautioned on gaining the eastern bank to keep near each other, the spot being much infested by predatory Arabs from the neighbouring shores of the Dead Sea, who frequently attack strangers at the ford, ere they regain possession of their arms, and when they are too fatigued, from the exertion of swimming, to defend themselves.

We now continued our route across an

undulating tract, intersected by gentle hills and ravines, entirely uncultivated and unproductive. We next entered on an extensive plain, traversed by a small rivulet, tributary to the Jordan, and for the most part thickly studded with the oleander and other wild shrubs; the most common of which was a bushy tree, as large as our hawthorn, covered with sharp prickles, and bearing a small round fruit about the size of the wild cherry, which, after it has become rotten, is sweet and pleasant to the taste. This bush (the *Spina Christi* of botanists) is supposed to have supplied the crown of thorns with which our Saviour's head was encircled at the time of his crucifixion. Another shrub, very common in the plain of the Jordan, produces a fruit from which they were wont to make the balm of the Samaritan.

We observed hereabouts many spots of

cultivated land, and crops of corn ready for the harvest ; which in some degree relieved the desolate appearance of the surrounding country. These patches of cultivation were the property of the Arab tribe, whose chief was our guide, some families of which were accustomed to descend from their mountain resorts at the season of sowing, and pitching their tents for a while in the plain, to prepare the soil in the rudest manner, and depart, leaving the seed scarcely beneath the surface, to be drawn forth to perfection rather by the fructifying operation of a brilliant sun, than by the influence of an arid soil. They return at the season of the harvest to gather in the ripened grain, when it sometimes happens that enemies, of another tribe, have already robbed them of their anticipations, or the wild boars of the woods have destroyed the expected crops.*

* "The boar out of the wood doth waste it,

The day had become exceedingly hot, and we halted for an hour to enjoy the shade of the high bushes, and the refreshment of the cooling stream. A few tents were scattered here and there in preparation for the approaching harvest, and as I strolled in the front of one of them, I observed a group of the occupants eating "parched corn," of which they offered me, with careless smiles, a handful.*

Continuing our journey, we soon began to mount some barren hills, the roots of the mountain ridge which we were about to cross. Here we fell in with a moving

and the wild beast of the field doth devour it."—
Psalm lxxx. 13.

* "He reached her parched corn, and she did eat."—Ruth ii. 14.

Parched corn is frequently eaten in Arabia. The laborious process of making bread being often inconvenient or impossible.

camp of Arabs belonging to the tribe of our chief, which was changing its station ; it was composed of about eighty families, and we were much struck with the beauty and strength of the camels, and the numerous flocks of sheep and goats. In the rear were the sumpter camels, laden with the women and tent materials, and the moveables of each family. The saddles or panniers of the camels here were of a different form from those we had observed in the Syrian Desert ; the mats and carpets were thrown over the back of the animal, and on these were hung two round hollow pads, large enough to hide and entirely envelop the hunch on the back of the camel. In this nest-like contrivance, the women, with their infants, were crouched, and almost concealed ; while in some I observed the head of a new-born lamb or kid, forming part of the family group.

On reaching the summit of this hilly country, which we had been laboriously climbing for several hours, we halted again to refresh ourselves and horses, and to eat of the coarse fare which we had brought with us. The spot selected was under the shade of two or three stunted oaks, and commanded a magnificent view, extending towards the Dead Sea and its surrounding mountains, and over the plain of Jericho, traversed longitudinally by the river Jordan, whose winding channel was marked by the darker line of vegetation on its banks,—beyond were seen the mountains of Judæa, which bounded the plain on the side of Jerusalem.

We again resumed our journey, and the country improved as we advanced; gentle elevations clothed with the richest herbage, and crowned with groves of trees, enclosed us on every side.

Our direction, which had been due east

from the plain of Jericho, now turned a little north. After riding for several hours, sometimes following the winding of a secluded valley, and sometimes concealed amongst the woodlands above, we struck into a narrow defile, on entering which, our guides, suddenly interrupting the silence and regularity which fatigue had for some time imposed upon our little troop, began to shout aloud ; and giving us to understand that we were approaching the place of their encampment, pressed forward to prepare for our reception. Inspired by this welcome news, we forced our tired horses into a trot, and soon emerging from the narrow pass, a scene burst upon our view, the most picturesque and the most interesting I had ever beheld. A spacious lawn was spread before us, covered with a mantle of deepest green, and decked with flowers of every colour ; rounded slopes and lengthened vistas opened out in every direc-

tion, here, terminated by groves of trees, clad in all the splendour of their summer foliage, and there, abruptly closed by rocky eminences projecting their rugged points amidst the wild shrubs that entwined around them. A limpid stream flowed through the midst, and a bold and varied outline of loftier hills encircled in the distance this secluded region. Clusters of tents were scattered around, and their occupants, assisted by numerous dogs, were busily engaged in gathering the flocks together for the night.

We rode direct to the camp of our chief, which was placed almost in the centre of the landscape I have described ; the men came forward to greet our party as we approached ; the women appeared in the front of their tents, and the children ran wild and naked around us.

Having dismounted, our horses were led away to a short distance to be fettered to the

ground, and we were received with a frank and unaffected welcome beneath the dwelling of our noble chief.

Coffee was soon prepared and offered to each ; meanwhile a lamb was slaughtered, and a fire having been lighted in the centre of the tent, the reeking carcass was thrown upon the burning embers, and being turned over, ever and anon, with the points of swords and fire-brands, was soon pronounced, in the language of our interpreter, to be " ben' cotto," and we were summoned to our repast. Fortunately this was not the first time that we had been guests at such a banquet, and we joined the circle with less repugnance perhaps than a Parisian epicurean would have done. We received, each in our turn, pieces of mangled flesh, torn from the carcass by the hands of our tawny companions. It is a mark of favour and condescension on the part of the chief and the aged, in these feasts of hospitality, to give

their half-devoured morsels, or half-gnawed bones to strangers to finish, and I received several proofs of such kind distinction.

Having finished our dinner, if such a repast merits the appellation, an aged man, darker and leaner than the rest, with a sprinkling of grey hairs hanging few and far between, over a deep-furrowed forehead, with one eye extinguished, and the other small, black, and fiery, drew himself on his haunches, pushing forward a large mortar containing the apparatus for preparing coffee, forced himself through our aristocratic circle, and taking up a position close to the fire, went through all the ceremony of roasting, bruising, and boiling. This unregarded coffee-maker had no sinecure, for our tent was full of visitors, and it was necessary to offer a cup to each without distinction. Much conversation followed, and the simple and earnest manner of expressing their sentences, but without any

rhetoꝛical action, and the gravity of their demeanour, gave an air of sincerity at least, if not of dignity, to their intercourse. They talked over the affairs of their tribe, their losses of cattle, and the wars of their neighbours ; but as we had travelled that day fifteen hours, we had withdrawn ourselves one by one to a short distance from the fire, and, wrapped in our sheep-skin cloaks, had fallen asleep long ere our host and his guests had settled the politics of their nation.

Perhaps my readers will not object if I here interrupt the narrative of my journey to Djeerash, for the purpose of mentioning a few of the most interesting of the laws and customs of these Arabs of the mountain, which we learned during the five or six days we sojourned amongst them.

The tribe of the Adooans, under whose protection we now were, is composed of three great divisions, each commanded by its own

sheik : the name of one of whom is Suleiman, of another Deeab, and the other Fâhdel, our friend and conductor. The three are equal in authority, and nearly so in the number of their forces—unitedly, they could bring into the field one thousand horsemen, and a numerous body of fighting men on foot.

In addition to a lance, (the usual weapon of an Arab horseman,) some had a sabre or pistols.

The whole population of the tribe is from ten to eleven thousand, and the territory which they command extends from Djeerash to the Jordan, comprising a great portion of the ancient Gilead. Their wealth consists chiefly in camels and horses, and in flocks of sheep and goats ; but they are also, in a slight degree, cultivators of the land. They are richer and more civilized than the Arabs of the Syrian Desert ; and they have a greater reputation for bravery. The best proof of

their courage is found in their wealth and independence, although surrounded by war-like and hostile tribes.

The sheik claims by right a fourth part of the produce of the cultivated land, which consists in wheat, barley, durra, and maize. Their time of sowing is when the leaves fall from the trees, and the harvest is in the month of May. Their flocks are sheared in the same month ; and at the same time of year they pluck the hair from their camels to construct their tents.

Each tribe protects itself by military regulations ; they have stations of outposts, and the different encampments communicate with one another by established signals. In the day-time, when an enemy is perceived, a lance, with a handkerchief on the spear-head, is placed on the highest ground near the spot where the attack is expected ; and those in the distance hasten to the rendezvous ; at

night they fire matchlocks to apprize the camp of danger.

The sheik is despotic—he is the chief judge in all disputes—he decides for peace or war ; and he orders the removal of the tribe from one station to another.

Moreover, he designates his successor, and generally chooses amongst his sons the one who bears the best character for bravery, and whom he thinks the most capable of defending and protecting the interests of the tribe.

At the death of the chief of a family, his possessions in flocks and herds are divided equally amongst his sons. The eldest receiving, in addition to the others, the tent and its furniture, and the water-skins ; the daughters are left under the protection of their brothers.

The birth of a child is not celebrated by any ceremony, and the nurture of its earliest

years differs in no way from that of the lambs and kids belonging to its parents.

When there are in the encampment many children from the age of eight to twelve years, an itinerant master is obtained to teach them to read, and repeat their prayers. As soon as a boy acquires sufficient strength, he is made to mount on horseback, an event of great joy to the father, which is participated in by the whole tribe, because they are about to have another protector of their liberty. At the age of seventeen or eighteen a young man generally marries, for this purpose he addresses himself to the father of the girl on whom he has fixed his affections; and agrees with him for the amount of the present which he is to give in exchange for her hand. The number of their wives is limited to four, according to the Mahommedan law; but here, as amongst the richer and more civilized followers of that creed, few can sup-

port the expenses, and still fewer the inconveniences of the Prophet's generosity. When either of the party desires to be released from the marriage tie, a young colt is the price of separation, and the children, if any, remain dependent upon the father.

When a man dies, he is buried near the spot where his ancestors repose ; and the whole encampment, men and women, follow his corpse to the grave ; but the women only attend their own sex to the tomb.

Their funeral processions are silent and decorous. Nor do they, like many of the Bedooeen tribes, hire strangers to recite the virtues of the deceased, and to mourn aloud his death with frantic lamentations.

Amongst the Arabs the difference of fortune is seldom very great ; they may almost be divided into three classes—the sheik, who is before all—those who have a horse—and those who have not.

The great ambition of a poor Arab is to possess a horse ; he is then held in some estimation, because he can number himself amongst the chief protectors of his tribe, and can follow his sheik to battle.

The Arab on foot, who has no other arms than a bad matchlock, and sometimes only a club, is of much less importance ; he can assist in the defence of the encampment on an occasion of regular attack ; but, as he cannot fly at the signal of alarm to oppose the enemy, he must be contented with the more ignoble part of remaining beneath his tent, whilst the horseman, leaping on the back of his ever-ready courser, speeds to the post of danger.

If disputes are not unfrequent amongst these children of nature, they rarely demand the intervention of judicial authority to terminate them. All the inhabitants of the same encampment are more or less united

by the ties of relationship ; and a whole tribe is no other than one great family, often sprung from the same stock. Thus, when strife arises, a brother is always at hand to act as mediator ; should that resource fail in producing reconciliation, the affair is brought before the chief of the encampment to which the disputants belong ; and, as a last appeal, which is seldom necessary, it is referred to the sheik of the tribe.

In the case of theft, four times the value of what is stolen must be restored. If a man kills another accidentally, he must pay the value of one thousand Turkish piastres (about 25*l.*) to the nearest relative of the deceased.

But, in case of intentional murder, five thousand piastres is the price of blood ; and if the murderer will not or cannot pay the ransom, he is put to death. I asked, if a child killed his parent, or a husband his wife

(crimes not uncommon in civilized countries), what price would redeem such a deed ? The reply was, that their laws allotted no punishment for a crime that was not conceivable. Prisoners of war are made to redeem their liberty by the sacrifice of all that they possess. Their tents, and their horses, their camels, and their flocks, must be given up to their vanquishers ; and they are often bound to a tree until an assurance has been obtained that nothing has been withheld.

Mild as are the laws of these uncivilized wanderers, they are nevertheless sufficient to bind them in mutual peace and love, and to afford them security in their individual property ; whilst their unanimity of heart and hand enables them to protect their joint possessions from the assaults of their enemies.

Almost as naked and wild as the hills which surround them, they lie down to slumber in security when the shades of night

spread around, and they rise with the day to roam in careless freedom amidst their boundless dominions ; and if we consider that the feelings of humanity and of brotherly love are strong and active amongst these untutored people, and that they blend the gentler affections of the heart with the nobler qualities of virtue in an eminent degree, it must be conceded that, however we may boast our intellectual superiority, and the more refined pleasures of civilization, their portion of happiness is as great as our own.

Although these roving inhabitants of the wilderness have neither temples nor tabernacles dedicated to the Prophet, nor a Shiloh for a Holy Place, still they neglect not the outward forms of prayer, and they are strict in the observance of those religious ordinances which do not require the intervention of priests or identity of place.

If we venture to compare these denizens

of the Syrian mountains with the majority of the inhabitants of the great cities of our own favoured land, or even with the major part of its rural population,—if we think of the drunkenness, the vice, and the infidelity of the one, and the sober, moral, and religious demeanour of the other, how stands the comparison ? I fear that the unsophisticated and obedient followers of an arch-impostor will put to shame tens of thousands of professing Christians.

The truth is, that Mahomet, like all the leading charlatans of the European, as well as of the Oriental world, political as well as religious, has had the cunning to discern that the Christian revelation contains a system of morality and of order infinitely superior to all the boasted ethics of the heathen or of infidel philosophy. Thus, the Koran, by combining religion and civil law in the same code,—its borrowed precepts of

Christian morality are enforced by the authority of Oriental despotism.

The day after our arrival at the camp of the Arabs was the feast of the Beyram, the principal of the only two religious festivals permitted by the Arabian lawgiver. It is a day of rejoicing and of mutual congratulation, and follows immediately after the great fast of the Ramazan, which is an ordinance of severer self-denial than is to be found in the ritual of any Christian sect.

The Ramazan lasts thirty days, during which period, besides the extraordinary prayers and penances which are commanded at that season, it is forbidden to the faithful to put a morsel of food, or a drop of water between their lips, from the rising to the going down of the sun. And being a moveable fast, falling sometimes in the hottest season of the year, it requires no small degree of faith and obedience, especially

not obliged, for want of arms, to submit to the indignity of being robbed and rudely handled, and our lives imperilled, as happened to us in the Desert of Palmyra, by a fierce attack of Bedooeen Arabs, a short time previous to the incident I am now describing. We now followed our friends, as well as our less spirited horses would permit, to assist in the defence of their camp ; and pursuing the track of the horsemen over some low hills for about a quarter of an hour, we came up with our Sheik surrounded by a strong party of his Arabs, who were consulting on the expediency of pursuing a party of an adverse tribe, who, taking advantage of a day devoted to enjoyment, had fallen suddenly on the flanks of the Adooans, hoping to seize some of their cattle ere alarm or resistance could be made ; but, finding that they were thwarted in their expectations, had fled hastily away.

Fáhdel observed our approach with evident signs of pleasure, and to reward us for the zeal we had shown in his cause, paid us the compliment of saying, that if he had one hundred horsemen, as well armed and with as good will as ourselves, they would not fear all the Anázees of the desert.

The ceremonies of the day having been fulfilled, and the tranquillity of the camp insured, we proposed to Fáhdel that we should pursue our journey to Djeerash without further delay ; to which he at first objected, observing, that, in consequence of the threatened attack on the outposts of the camp that morning, and from some circumstances which he had learned during his visits to the chiefs of the tribe, he had reason to think that the country through which we were about to travel was not entirely free from danger ; and he, therefore, suggested that it would be better for us to remain

another day in security beneath his tent, that he might obtain more certain information respecting the probability of our meeting with difficulty on our way. But, as we had often suffered on former occasions by the procrastinating character of our Arab conductors, we replied, that if there was any danger in our undertaking, we were ready to share it with him and the companions he should think proper to select for our escort ; that we were well armed, and felt ourselves secure under his guidance. When he saw that we were in earnest in our wishes to depart, he promised, that “ ere the sun should sink behind the western hills we should be seated in our saddles ;” adding, that “ he had promised his friend, the Aga of Jericho, to conduct us in safety to Djeerash, and, God willing, he would fulfil his word, or his life should pay the forfeit.”

A more plentiful, but not more delicate

meal, than that of which we had partaken the day before, was prepared previous to our departure. A young camel had been killed in the night by wolves, the rescued carcase of which, cut into pieces, and roasted on the live coals, constituted the only viands. The frequent arrival of new guests, chiefly consisting of the elders of the tribe, prolonged the repast till the hour of our departure. And whilst the last rays of the sun still lingered on the summits of the surrounding mountains, we were, as our chief had promised, "seated in our saddles." Six horsemen, each armed with a single spear, were chosen to accompany us, and Fáhdel, placing himself at their head, led the way across the hilly country to the eastward.

Our path at first conducted us through several encampments of the tribe ; the cattle and the flocks were collected together in front of the tents, and fires, for the prepara-

tion of the evening meal, were beginning to blaze within. The Arabs came forth, and greeted our party as it passed, and expressed their wishes for our safe return.

For some time the twilight enabled us indistinctly to observe the character of the country through which we journeyed. Low hills, thickly planted with trees, and broad winding valleys clothed with rich pasture, seemed to extend in every direction.

We rode almost in silence till midnight, when our chief proposed that we should halt till the morning. The spot where we alighted was on the brow of a hill, skirted by a wood which screened us from a chilly wind that had begun to blow with considerable violence ; having secured our horses in the usual manner, by staking them to the ground, we wrapped ourselves in our cloaks and slept for four hours without disturbance, except that on one occasion, an Arab, who

was on the watch, observing two wolves pass near our party, interrupted our slumbers by his strange outcry to scare the animals away.*

At dawn we continued our journey. Nothing can exceed the magnificence of the rising day in an eastern climate—especially in the mountainous districts, where no mists or exhalations, generated by the first influence of the sun, ascend and conceal the purity and brilliancy of the heavens, but one broad blaze of yellow lights up the eastern horizon, blending by degrees with the deep blue ether of the zenith.

The morning air was pure and fresh, and our Arabs were in high spirits; often, when the ground was level, they would dash for-

* Wolves prowling in the evening appear to have been common. See Jeremiah v. 6: "A wolf of the evening shall spoil them." "Their horses fiercer than evening wolves."—Hab. i. 8.

ward and engage one another in mock fight, checking their horses in speed, and turning on their adversary when pursued with inconceivable rapidity. Sometimes we exchanged our horses and arms with them, and they were highly amused at our vain attempts to imitate their adroitness in the use of the lance, and seemed much pleased at their own superiority in the management of that weapon. We thus rode gaily on for several hours through the same undulating and pasture country as we had traversed the previous night, without meeting any Arabs or their flocks, or any object to attract our attention, except a wild boar of extraordinary size, which was seen not far from our path ; as there was no wood or other cover very near, we endeavoured to ride him down and bring him to bay, but he beat us with great ease, especially up hill.

We now began to descend into a deep

and narrow valley, called Ouadi el Zacca, running in a direction nearly north and south ; a small stream flowed through the centre, shaded by laurustinus and other shrubs. Having crossed this valley, we soon came to a second still more profound, and divided also by a rapid stream, which, we were told, was the river of Djeerash.

We here took a more northern direction, and continued on the acclivity parallel with the gorge, until we arrived, after seven hours' riding, at the object of our search.

The few travellers who had visited the ruins of Geraza (or Djeerash) had described them as being equal in extent and magnificence to the most celebrated remains of antiquity ; and they had even been brought into comparison with Palmyra. Our expectations, therefore, were raised to a high degree, and we urged forward to enjoy the first impression, which the sudden view of a pros-

trate city in the midst of a wilderness is powerfully calculated to produce.

Geraza stood on two corresponding plains divided by a deep and narrow valley, through which flowed a rapid stream, having its origin from fountains in the centre of the town. Two bridges of stone, connected the opposite sides, but the principal monuments and buildings of the ancient city occupied the western bank of the river, presenting, as we viewed them from a slight elevation, a beautiful and imposing appearance.

A triumphal arch, gateways, theatres, temples, long lines of columns, and architectural masses met the eye over a wide extent, stretching to the northward. Vast fragments of ruined edifices had rolled down the sides of the valley which intersected the city, and were half concealed by wild shrubs and vegetation, amidst which the streamlet found a difficult and noisy channel.

The first object which engaged our attention, on approaching the city from the south, was a triumphal arch standing alone at a short distance without the walls ; its front was ornamented with four columns of slight proportions, the shafts of which, springing from a design of palm-leaves, seemed to stand on inverted capitals, placed on tall and slender pedestals ; the upper portion of the columns were broken, and the crowning capitals, with portions of entablature, were destroyed, and lying in fragments around.

The architecture of this arch was Corinthian ; it was probably erected in commemoration of some great event connected with the welfare of the city ; or as a triumphal gateway for the passage of some victorious commander and his army.

Between this monument and the walls of the city, to the right, there was an extensive oval excavation, measuring about three hun-

dred and eighty feet, by one hundred and fifty, the sides of which were supported by a wall of fine workmanship, surrounded with a moulding of wrought stone. This vast arena at first suggested the idea of a stadium or hippodrome, but, on more minute examination, it was evident that it was intended for a naumachia, or theatre for the exhibition of a sea-fight, the channels by means of which it was filled with water being still observable.

Passing onwards we entered the precincts of the ancient city by a gateway, great part of which was destroyed, but enough remained to show that its original design was similar to the triumphal arch already described. No more than substructions of the wall on either side of this gateway were discernible.

Our observation was now directed towards a magnificent oval colonnade, fifty-eight columns of which were standing with their entablature ; on some of them were cut, in

Greek characters, the names of individuals by whose munificence they were erected. From this colonnade a double range of columns was continued in a straight line running parallel with the banks of the river, apparently marking the direction of the principal street.

Before penetrating farther into the town, we turned to the left to visit a theatre and temple, which occupied a commanding situation immediately within the walls, on the south-east angle of the city.

The temple was of large dimensions, and had been surrounded by a peristyle of Corinthian columns, which were all fallen, but the walls of the temple were almost entire. Judging from the prostrate fragments of the frieze, the cornice, and the capitals, this temple must have been a beautiful and splendid ornament to the city.

The theatre was close to the temple, situated on a gentle declivity, its cavæa was partly excavated in the ground, and partly constructed of masonry ; it was shaped like a horse-shoe, being a segment of a circle, about one-tenth more than a semicircle ; it contained thirty rows of seats, divided into two series by a broad circular platform, or open corridor, from which small flights of steps, disposed in equi-distant radii, ascended and descended for the convenience of the spectators to reach their stations. Sufficient portions of the orchestra and scene remained to show the original plan of the theatre, and that much labour had been bestowed on its architectural decorations.

On quitting the theatre we returned to the oval colonnade, and pursued our way along the imaginary street before-mentioned, having a range of columns on each side. These co-

lumns were for the most part erect: they were of the Corinthian order, but not uniform in their proportions or execution.

At the distance of about two hundred yards we came to a point of intersection with another street; at each of the angles was a massive pedestal of a square form, which had either been surmounted with columns, some fragments of which, of a large size, were lying beneath, or they might have supported an elevation in the form of a double triumphal arch or gateway. To the right, this intersecting street, which was also ornamented with an avenue of columns, conducted to a bridge; to the left, it was lost amidst mouldering heaps of fallen buildings. Beyond this point we noticed three columns of the Corinthian order, of larger proportions and finer execution than those around; a fourth was lying on the ground. The pillars had evidently constituted the façade of a small

prostyle temple of a semicircular form, which had its front towards the street.

Continuing forwards in the same direction, we came to a gateway on the left hand, the frieze and cornice of which was highly wrought and richly ornamented ; this led to a flight of steps conducting to an elevated platform, on which were the remains of a large temple, the walls of which were entire : it had been encircled with a double peristyle of Corinthian columns, but they were almost all fallen to the ground, and lay scattered amidst vast fragments of the other parts of the building. Opposite to this temple we observed the ruins of a Christian church of the middle ages : eight columns, which had assisted to support the interior nave, were standing.

At the northern extremity of this magnificent street was another gateway, very similar in design to that by which we had en-

tered the city, and connected on each side to the walls.

The ruins of many more public buildings than I have mentioned, clusters of columns, subterraneous galleries, and monumental structures attracted our observation on all sides, a description of which would require much more space than this short sketch of an excursion to Geraza is intended to occupy ; but I have said enough to show the former grandeur and importance of that far distant city, amidst the splendid remains of which we wandered a whole day with amazement and delight.

In the extent and number of its monuments, and in the picturesque beauty of its situation, Geraza may justly claim the first place amongst the ruins of the ancient cities of Syria ; but it cannot challenge a comparison with the mighty Temple of the Sun and the giant pillars of Palmyra. Moreover, the

chief part of the buildings of Geraza are constructed of a dark sombre-coloured stone,* which gives them an air of heaviness, and destroys the light and shades of their architectural decorations. But in the city of the “Desert Queen” all is brilliant as the sun which glitters on its walls, and the tints as soft and delicate as the sand which surrounds them.

It was our intention to pass the night at Djeerash, that we might complete our imperfect examination of some of the most interesting monuments more at our leisure the following day ; but having ascertained from some Arabs of the Adooan tribe, who dwelt at Djeerash at that season of the year, to collect the produce of a few patches of arable land in the vicinity, that a strong party of the warlike tribe of the Benneseukers were encamped not far off—and as it was very probable that, if they should become ac-

* A species of traprock.

quainted with our situation, and the object of our journey, they would attack and plunder our party—it was determined by our chief that we should quit the neighbourhood of Djeerash that night. Accordingly, when the evening advanced, we prepared for our departure.

On leaving the ruins we took a direction inclining to the south, and journeyed for several hours, following the windings of the valley in which the little river of Djeerash flowed. At midnight we halted on the margin of the stream, and bivouacked until the morning in security ; but we were unable to close our eyes in sleep, owing to the incessant howling of jackals, attracted to our station by the smell of some camel's flesh which we had roasted for our supper, on a fire that still blazed in the centre of our party. These creatures, although as diminutive and, even when collected in numbers, as little to be

feared as foxes, are far more troublesome to the weary traveller than animals of a larger and fiercer kind ; there is something so wild and piteous in their cry, and they prowl so near and fearlessly around him, that no fatigue is proof against the excitation of their noisy approach.

We commenced our journey the following morning as soon as the sun had begun to streak with a golden tinge the summits of the distant hills. Having crossed the stream, we ascended its western bank, and proceeded in a direction a little west of south, for the purpose of visiting the ruins of Amman, the ancient capital of the "Children of Ammon," before we returned to the camp of our chief.

Our path, which had hitherto traversed the territory of Deeab, one of the princes of the Adooans, now began to skirt the district of a hostile tribe. Fáhdel here made our party halt, and desired us to look to our fire-

arms, and to be silent and watchful, observing that we might be surprised and attacked in the woods and defiles through which we were about to pass : and he advised us to keep close together, “for,” said he, “a single Arab, springing from an ambuscade, may dash across our path, and strike with unerring spear some unwary straggler of the party.”

As we advanced the country became more wild and beautiful, our track winding in and out amidst thick forests which clad the base of lofty hills, whose bare and broken summits towered above their dense vesture of wood. Sometimes, turning round a steep angle, the trees would break away, and leave the eye to roam over a wide extent of rich and varied country. But no inhabitants nor habitations, no flocks nor herds, no trace of man of present or past times met the view in these luxuriant regions—once the country of the giant kings of Bashan—once the fer-

tile hills of Gilead, and the rich pasture lands of the numerous tribes of Reuben and of Gad, and the country of the "ten cities" of the Roman conquests, east of the river Jordan!

We had ridden for six hours with more than ordinary speed, and our horses, as well as ourselves, stood much in need of refreshment and repose. The heat, too, had become oppressive; our chief therefore proposed that we should halt for an hour.

A grove of lofty trees in the middle of a grassy plain not far from our path, offered a refreshing shade, and at the same time security against sudden attack. Here, having dismounted, we threw ourselves beneath the dense foliage of the trees; a streamlet of purest water trickled through the lawn at our feet, some draughts of which, and a few handfuls of cold boiled rice, soon renewed our strength, and enabled us to continue our journey.

Whilst reposing in this delightful spot, an incident occurred which placed the character of our Arab conductors in an interesting point of view. One of the party, a younger brother of our chief, had been always remarkably silent and reserved, and he had held no converse with his brother during the whole of our journey. This young man, whose name was Hahmét, was now seated apart from our little group, holding the bridle of his horse with one hand, and with the other plucking the grass and scattering it carelessly around him like a man suffering under some mental vexation.

Whilst thus secluded and unobservant, one of his companions, the eldest of the party, approached him, and taking him by the hand, led him reluctantly to the Sheik, who rose up and received him with some degree of sternness. The brothers regarded each other for some moments in silence, then, rushing into

each others arms, cordially embraced. From that moment a new spirit seemed to have been awakened in our Arabs, no sooner were we mounted to proceed, than they showed their satisfaction at the reconciliation which had taken place, by galloping and skirmishing in loud, and sportive contention. The young Hahmét especially betrayed, by his wild and joyous behaviour, how heavy a burden had been removed from his heart.

The circumstances which gave rise to the scene I have described were simply these :— on setting out on our journey to Djeerash, Hahmét signified his desire to be one of our escort, but his brother, the Sheik, would not consent to his wishes, reminding him that the enemies of his tribe were hovering about the camp, and that he ought to remain at home to defend his family and his possessions in case of attack.

The disappointment of the young chief

was very great, and he made use of some rude words in reply, which so offended his brother, that in a moment of anger, he struck him, and forbade him to quit the camp, and we departed without him ; but on the following morning when we rose from our bivouac to proceed on our journey, young Hahmét was amongst the number of our Arabs. As we were then ignorant of what had taken place between the brothers, we cordially welcomed his arrival ; but his subsequent silence and reserve were a frequent subject of conversation amongst our party.

We had not continued our journey long ere the foremost of our party checked his horse, and, retreating hastily to the centre of our troop, informed us that the prints of horses' feet, fresh and numerous, were observable in the path we were pursuing. At this news our Arabs became very uneasy ; having halted, they conversed amongst themselves

more earnestly than they were wont to do : they knew that war was raging between two tribes which occupied the country in the vicinity of our route, and they conjectured that we must inevitably fall in with some of the contending parties. The Sheik ordered two of his men to precede us at a short distance, and to give immediate information on perceiving the enemy ; for such it was concluded must be the horsemen whose track had just been discovered. The Arabs flourishing their lances, brought them into a position adapted for instant use, and pressed onwards in close phalanx.

We proceeded for some time without meeting any more substantial proofs of danger, when suddenly the advanced posts halted, and without looking back, waved their lances for us to hasten forwards : on joining them, they pointed to about a dozen horsemen riding at an easy canter up the slope of a hill

at a short distance before us. A few words of encouragement passed rapidly between our Arabs, and in an instant they dashed forwards, shouting the war-cry to the advancing party.

In numbers our apparent foe was little superior to our own, but our fire-arms added much to our strength and confidence. The Sheik had given us strict orders to keep in the rear, and not to intermeddle until we should see their lances crossed with those of the party we pursued, lest we should use our fire-arms before it was ascertained whether they were friends or foes. Unfortunately our hopes of witnessing an Arab skirmish were once more disappointed.

The party we followed, on discovering our approach, faced about, and placing their lances in rest, waited on the brow of the hill to receive us with the advantage of ground. We galloped up with breathless speed to break

their line, but before a blow was aimed, we were recognized as friends.

Both parties dismounted as a sign of peace, and after the usual forms of salutation had been observed, seated themselves on the ground face to face, and mutually explained the circumstances which had conducted them to that part of the country. Our own story was soon told, and the presence of infidel strangers corroborated the statement.

The Arabs we had overtaken with so much suspicion and anxiety, belonged to the tribe of Suleiman, one of the Adooan princes. They informed us that, on the previous day, a strong body of Anázees (a fierce and wandering race of Bedooeens, the terror of the Syrian deserts) had fallen suddenly on one of their principal encampments, and before a sufficient reinforcement could be summoned from the more distant stations to repel the attack, the Adooans were defeated and plun-

dered. Eight horsemen, and eleven footmen, were killed, and forty camels, besides many horses, were driven away in triumph by the conquerors.

Suleiman, on being acquainted with the insult offered to his tribe, instantly rallied a hundred of the boldest and swiftest of his Arabs, and set out to avenge the blood of his children, and to redeem the honour, if not the possessions, which they had lost.

He came up with the Anázees fatigued with the exertions of their enterprise, and delayed by the difficulty of conducting the camels and horses which they had seized.

Finding it was in vain to contend against foes so many and so vigorous, the Anázees, after a slight resistance, deserted their spoil, and escaped to the recesses of the surrounding hills, but not before sixteen had paid the forfeit of their lives for their rash undertaking.

The Arabs with whom we now conversed were in search of the camels and horses which had been released from their Bedooeen captors, and which, taking advantage of their temporary freedom, had wandered wherever pasture and seclusion invited.

The object which both parties had in view having been thus explained, we all rose from the ground, and, exchanging the salutation of peace, remounted our horses, and renewed our respective expeditions. They struck into a different path, and were soon lost to our view amongst the woods and hills. We continued our journey to Amman.

From time to time we observed some camels grazing tranquilly in the grassy valleys near our path, probably a part of the locomotive plunder of the Anázees. These were the only evidences, besides a bridle, a broken lance, and the rude turban of an Arab, clotted with blood, which met our eye,

of the contention and slaughter of the previous day in that part of the wilderness.

The evening was far advanced before we came to Amman. Some herdsmen, who had taken up their abode for the night amongst the ruins of the ancient city, were greatly alarmed at our approach, and advanced to meet us in a hostile manner, supposing that a party of horsemen could have no other object than plunder ; but when they found that we were men of their own tribe, and that Fáhdel himself was with us, they came forward to salute their chief and welcome our arrival.

We had journeyed a whole day beneath a burning sun, but the continual expectation of attack had kept up our spirits and destroyed fatigue. That excitement having now subsided, we felt much exhausted, and when we had eaten of the provisions with which the shepherds of Amman kindly supplied us, we

slept soundly till the morning dawned, in the arena of an ancient theatre, surrounded by camels and herds.

“ And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching place for flocks.” *

Amman, or Rabbah, the chief city of the Ammonites, occupied the centre of a rich valley divided by a stream, which is tranquil and shallow in the summer, but in the winter becomes deep and impetuous.

“ Wherefore gloriest thou (Amman) in thy valleys, thy flowing valleys ?” †

The ruins of Amman at present existing show that it was once a large and magnificent city.

A theatre of extraordinary size and preservation, the remains of temples, of a church, and of many public edifices, are found on the southern side of the stream ; but the chief

* Ezek. xxv. 5.

† Jeremiah xlix. 4.

portion of the ancient town was situated on the northern bank, where the plain of the valley is broader.

A bridge of stone, consisting of a single arch, united the opposite sides of the city.

The banks of the river appear to have been paved, and its waters now glide over fragments of sculptured marble, which are visible beneath its surface.

The loftiest of the hills which bound the northern side of the valley is crowned by ruins of a castle, probably the work of the middle ages, based on more ancient foundations.

The substructions of the ancient walls may be traced throughout a great part of their circumference, crossing the valley and enclosing the hills on either side.

Without the precincts of the city we observed many tombs, some excavated in the

sides of the hills, and some constructed wholly of masonry. It is not my intention here to describe more minutely the ruins of Amman, but I cannot avoid recalling to the mind of my reader how perfectly the fate of Rabbah and of the Ammonites is in accordance with the prophecies of the sacred historians. Indeed every step which a traveller advances in that devoted land is confirmative of the truth of the Bible history.

The ruins of its ancient cities attest its recorded power and population ; its hills clothed with forests, and its valleys with the richest pasture, prove the productiveness of its soil, and that it would still abound in corn, and flow with milk, and oil, and wine, was not the curse of God still upon it.

It is trodden by the foot of the wanderer, but it is no man's inheritance. It knows not the plough, and receives no seed. The

flocks which fatten on its surface are the prey of the robber, and their possessors are cut off and carried into captivity.

“I will deliver thee (Amman) to the men of the East for a possession. . . . They shall eat thy fruit and drink thy milk.”*

Another long day's journey through a wilderness abounding in picturesque beauty and variety brought us once more to the chief station of the Adooans, and tents of our conductors ; every one came out to meet us as we approached, expressing great joy at our return.

We had been absent longer than they had expected, and so great were their fears concerning our safety, that a large party had determined to set out the next morning in search of us.

The reports which had reached them of the attacks of the Anázees upon Suleiman,

* Ezekiel xxv. 4.

their ally, had much increased their alarm at our delay ; moreover, their own camp had been surprised the previous night by robbers, who had succeeded in obtaining possession of three camels and a valuable mare, before they were discovered and repulsed.

We passed the day following with our friends, and were permitted to enter freely into their tents, and to converse with their women. This privilege was not likely to be abused, at least by those who consider beauty as the chief attractive quality of the daughters of Eve. Their clothes consisted of a cotton shirt with a girdle, and a robe of the same form and materials, hanging loosely over it. Their hair was plentiful, and bound on the head with strings of worsted. Their forms were erect and well-turned, but their persons were much neglected ; yet their love of finery and admiration was not the less. Fortunately we had brought with

us a few trifles from Jerusalem, such as glass bracelets and beads, which we gave, according to the best of our judgment, to the prettiest amongst them.

I was much struck with the silent and sombre demeanour of our friends, which, harmonizing with the wild and deserted scenery around, gave an air of repose, if not of sadness, to their character. I observed no evidences of domestic enjoyment, no demonstrative fondness for their children, or pride in introducing them to our notice. How far the pleasures of the imagination are indulged by these descendants of the olden world it is difficult to conceive. If, in their converse with one another, they expatiate on the wonders of the creation, and the beauties of the external world,—if they discourse eloquently upon the feelings which engender hope and love, and excite to mar-

carpet of the hills for the white and arid soil spread out beneath a still and sultry sky, our conductors as well as ourselves began to complain of fatigue.

It was evening before we reached the banks of the Jordan ; being much exhausted and heated by our long ride, we were unable to resist the temptation and luxury of bathing ; and, instead of following the more prudent example of our guides, who forded the river on horseback, we plunged into the stream, and swam to the opposite shore. Two hours more brought us to Jericho, where we found the Governor anxiously waiting our return ; for the time of our expected absence had been lengthened by several days. " I doubted not," said he, " the honour and faith of Fáhdel and his Arabs, but I thought of the enemies and robbers who abounded in the land you had gone to visit."

The time had now arrived for taking leave of our friends : after so short an acquaintance, and the fulfilment of a bargain, in the civilized world, a formal salutation and a heartless adieu would have made up the parting scene ; but not so with these barbarians,—tears stood in their eyes when they took our hands, and prayed that God might bless us, our parents, and children !

In them self-interest had not yet frozen up the springs of the heart, nor taught them to despise and conceal the kindlier feelings of our nature. If they were fierce and revengeful in war and hatred, they were yet more sincere and gentle in peace and friendship.

We now turned our horses towards Jerusalem, and they rode back to their native hills and savage freedom.

When the links of virtue shall become

more numerous than those of vice in the chains of civilization, then, and not till then, may the Adooans wear our boasted bonds.

G. H.

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